THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • DECEMBER 24, 2024 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

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JAPANESE AUTO GIANTS HONDA AND NISSAN TO BEGIN MERGER TALKS

Honda and Nissan have announced plans to join forces that could result in the creation of the world's third-largest automobile company

AIM IS TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIES OF SCALE

Joining forces would help the companies achieve economies of scale to compete with Toyota, Volkswagen and Chinese automakers like BYD. Also, Japanese companies, especially Honda, have lagged behind rivals in electric vehicles (EVs) and are now trying to catch up. Nissan has years of experience building batteries and EVs that could help Honda in developing its own EVs

COMPETITION FROM CHINESE EV MAKERS

- Honda, Nissan and Mitsubishi announced in August that they will share components for electric vehicles like batteries to cut costs | PTI
- The talks come at a time when Chinese automakers like BYD, Great Wall and Nio that make relatively affordable EVs are expanding their market shares as the world shifts away from fossil fuel-driven cars

$50 bn

WOULD BE THE MARKET CAPITALISATION OF THE MERGED ENTITY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Now, Dhaka note verbale for Hasina's extradition

Ministry of External Affairs confirms receiving it, offers no comment

BALA CHAUHAN @Bengaluru

BANGLADESH'S interim government said on Monday it had sent a note verbale to India seeking extradition of deposed former prime minister and Awami League head Sheikh Hasina. Hasina, 77, has been living in exile in India after she fled on August 5 following massive student protests over a controversial job quota.

Foreign affairs adviser Touhid Hossain told media persons that they had sent the note verbale asking to send Hasina back for judicial process. It came after Bangladesh's home advisor Jahangir Alam said his office had sent a letter to the foreign ministry to facilitate Hasina's extradition, quoting a prisoner exchange agreement with India "under which it (her extradition) will be carried out".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) confirmed they have received the diplomatic note from Dhaka. "We confirm that we have received a Note Verbale from the Bangladesh High Commission today in connection with an extradition request. At this time, we have no comment to offer on this matter," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

Speaking to this newspaper, former high commissioners to Bangladesh Veena Sikri (2003-06) and Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty (2007-09) said a "note verbale is not an instrument on which extradition can be sought. Extradition is a very long, detailed process involving the judiciary. Request for extradition comes at the end of the process," they said. "The requesting country has to complete the judicial process of proving the charges against the fugitive leader and convicting her," said Sikri.

She added that the UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) was invited to investigate the charges against Hasina. "The UNHRC team visited Bangladesh twice since August but they were not provided any evidence on the charges of murder, forced disappearance and human rights violations against Hasina," added Sikri. "I'm told that Dhaka has sought Hasina's extradition under a prisoner exchange agreement with India. Hasina is not a prisoner in India. She came here of her own will," the former diplomat pointed out.

India's Extradition Act prescribes separate procedures for handling extradition requests from different countries.

File picture of Sheikh Hasina | PTI

PROBE INTO ALLEGED $5 BN N-POWER SCAM

The interim government has also initiated probe into an alleged $5 billion Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project scam involving Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed (Joy), and niece Tulip Siddiq | P12

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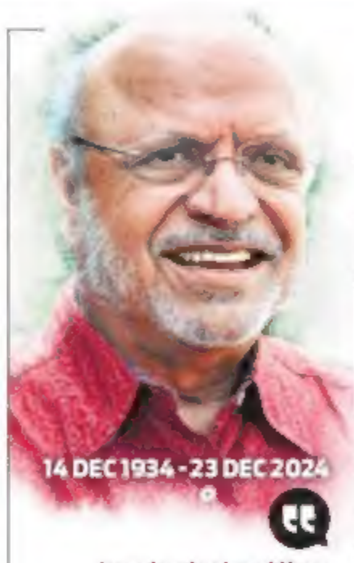
> Randhir Jaiswal, MEA spokesperson



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> I wonder what I would have become if he hadn't had faith in me when no one else did. He and Nira (his wife) were a huge support in my difficult days. He did whatever he could with his life till the end. Not many people can claim to have done that
>
> Naseeruddin Shah, actor

He was a leader of leaders

ATUL TIWARI
ACTOR, WRITER

ONE of those who lit the screens of Indian cinema with very meaningful colours and poignant hues left us on Monday. Shyam Benegal is no more. He was 90.

I was fortunate to work with him for almost 35 years. I was comparatively young when he invited me to write on the *Discovery of India* documentary. In the screenplay for an episode on the 1942 Quit India movement, I had included two trains and an elephant though I knew no director could afford two trains in a TV series.

Shyam Babu very politely asked me, "could we go with just one train?" I agreed and cut one scene of a train. As for the other train, he got it made in Film City. It ran on tracks to enable the filming of scenes of how trains were stopped during Gandhiji's movement. The elephant scene was also included. That was the magic of director Benegal.

He always trusted his team. He was a leader of leaders, who never had to command his army. His army of actors, technicians, writers, cameramen etc., were ready to march on one signal because he chose and trained them so well.

Coming from Lucknow during my early days, I invariably used to be late for meetings. One day, he looked at his watch and said, "young man, I don't know about you, but my time is a one-way street. Once it is gone, it's gone. I don't know about you, but this is how it works with me." That was the best way to admonish me. Even in admonishment there was wisdom. He never yelled or screamed unlike many other directors in Mumbai.

Shyam Benegal was a great teacher and a good leader. As his favourite actor Om Puri once said, "In the jungle of Indian cinema there are any number of trees of various kinds. The tallest is Satyajit Ray. And the widest, like the banyan in Calcutta's botanical garden, is Shyam Benegal."

He was the so-called Philosopher's Stone, whose one touch could turn iron into gold. I can only say, "Long live Shyam Babu. You are a story well told."

OUTREACH

PM Narendra Modi offers prayers to Infant Jesus to mark the Christmas festivities at an event hosted by Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, in Delhi on Monday | PTI

Govt schools can fail students of Classes 5 & 8

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @New Delhi

IN a major decision, the Centre has scrapped the 'no-detention policy' for classes 5 and 8 in schools governed by it, which means students will be failed if they do not clear the year-end examinations.

According to a gazette notification, if a student fails to fulfill the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, he or she shall be given additional instructions and an opportunity for re-examination within two months from the date of declaration of results.

"If the child appearing in the re-examination fails to fulfill the promotion criteria again, he shall be held back in fifth class or eighth class, as the case may be. "During the holding back of the child, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents of the child, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment," the notification said.

It will apply to over 3,000 schools run by the Central government including Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navaodyala Vidyalayas and Sainik Schools.

"Since school education is a state subject, states can make their decision in this regard," an official said.

Ravi-Laxmi episode a closed chapter, says Horatti

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

COUNCIL Chairman Basavaraj Horatti on Monday said that the issue of BJP MLC CT Ravi's alleged derogatory remarks against Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar in the House a few days ago, is a closed chapter as they have not lodged any complaint with him regarding breach of their privilege. "As of now, it is a closed chapter as they have not approached me with a complaint. If they (including Ravi) give it in writing, I will consider taking action by the privilege committee," he said.

He said police interference in the alleged spat between Ravi and Hebbalkar during the session in Belagavi is unacceptable. That's why he turned down the police commissioner's move to conduct a 'mahzar' inside the House as it was adjourned sine die. However, he clarified that he would go through the rules and look into previous incidents and take a final call on the issue. P4

Women lawyers can't appear with face veil: J&K HC

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

THE Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court has held that women advocates cannot appear before the court with their face covered. Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi cited provisions under the Bar Council of India (BCI) while making the observations in the order dated December 13.

The order is related to an incident on November 27 when a woman identifying herself as an advocate named Syed Ainain Qadri refused to remove her veil when Justice Rahul Bharti, who was hearing the case then, asked her to do so. The woman claimed it was her right to appear with face covered, adding the court can't force her to remove the veil.

Following this, Justice Bharti did not entertain her appearance as counsel saying the court was unable to confirm her identity. The bench also warned the petitioners the woman purportedly represented that their case could be dismissed if proper representation was not ensured.

The court then proceeded to adjourn the case to another date and sought a report from the Registrar General on the rules of dress code for lady advocates. The Registrar submitted the report on December 5. After examining the Registrar's report, the court held that the rules prescribed by the Bar Council of India do not mention any such right.

However, the court did not go further into the matter as the lawyer chose not to appear again. Later, another lawyer stepped in to represent the petitioners, whom Justice Kazmi heard before reserving the case for judgment on December 6.

The petition was dismissed on December 13 after the court found there was an alternative remedy available.

EXPRESS READ

9 Ayyappa devotees hurt in cylinder blast

Hubballi: Nine Ayyappa devotees suffered injuries when a gas cylinder exploded at a temporary structure built to offer prayers behind a temple in Hubballi early Monday. Of the injured, the condition of eight is critical and they are being treated in KIMS Hospital. The blast occurred when the devotees were asleep. It is said that one of them accidentally kicked the cylinder, which led to gas leak. As there was a lamp, the leaking cylinder caught fire and exploded. P5

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